



Healthy Homes

WHAT IS THE HEALTH ISSUE?

Housing conditions can significantly affect public health. Childhood lead poisoning, injuries, respiratory diseases such as asthma, and quality of life issues have been linked to the more than 6 million substandard housing units nationwide. Residents of these units are at increased risk for fire, electrical injuries, falls, rodent bites, and other illnesses and injuries. Other issues of concern relate to exposure to pesticide residues, indoor toxicants, tobacco smoke, and combustion gases. The burning of oil, gas, and kerosene can release a variety of combustion products, including carbon monoxide, a known cause of death. Healthy People 2010 goals from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services call for a 52 percent reduction in the number of substandard occupied housing units throughout the United States by 2010.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

To help reach the Healthy People 2010 goal, CDC developed the Healthy Homes Initiative, a coordinated, practical, and systematic approach to prevent disease and injury resulting from harmful housing conditions. The Healthy Homes Initiative is designed to fill gaps in the understanding of housing's relation to health. It also provides information, training, and guidance materials to environmental public health and housing professionals to identify and remedy housing deficiencies that may result in adverse health outcomes. In support of this initiative, CDC is developing a revised and updated healthy homes inspection manual, an urban rodent management survey manual, and a housing-related environmental risk evaluation manual. All are expected to be available for distribution or access through CDC's Web site in 2005.

CDC also supports the National Healthy Homes Training Center and Network (NHHTC) which has affiliations with many academic centers nationwide. The NHHTC purpose is twofold: to help health and housing professionals recognize and address housing-related health hazards, and to promote the broader national healthy homes movement which seeks to reduce substandard housing to prevent disease and injury and improve the quality of life. In 2004, CDC assisted NHHTC in developing the curriculum and course materials for a pilot training program at Johns Hopkins University and identified faculty to teach core competencies of environmental public health as they relate to housing.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

In 2005, NHHTC will expand its initial training site at Johns Hopkins University to five academic centers across the country. A Web-based training and a Healthy Homes Clearinghouse will be developed by NHHTC that will disseminate course-related materials and serve as a central point for sharing information on healthy homes.